

AMENDMENTS OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method of providing a virtual product to third parties, the virtual product being present in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality, the method comprising:

- (a) providing a reduced version of the virtual product, and information relating to a distributor of the virtual product, the reduced version of the virtual product having a quality which is inferior to the quality of the original version, and the information relating to the distributor being associated with the reduced version of the virtual product;

wherein, on the basis of the information associated with the reduced version, additional information, which indicates that the reduced version of the virtual product has been passed on to a third party by the distributor, is created if in response to the third party has having acquired rights to the virtual product after subsequent to obtaining the reduced version of the virtual product,

wherein the method is performed by a hardware apparatus.

2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, comprising:

- (b) passing on the reduced version of the virtual product to the third party; and
- (c) if in response to the third party who has received the reduced version of the virtual product ~~wants~~ wanting to acquire rights to the virtual product in the original version,
 - (c.1) performing the transaction required for obtaining a predetermined right to the virtual product in the original version; and

(c.2) upon completion of the transaction, receiving information to obtain the original version of the virtual product, and

(c.3) based on the information associated with the reduced version, creating information indicating that the transaction is based on the passing-on of the reduced version of the virtual product by the distributor.

3. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the reduced version of the virtual product is a reduced-quality copy of the virtual product, and wherein step (c.2) includes receiving the original version of the virtual product.

4. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein step (a) of creating the reduced version includes limiting the bit rate/bandwidth of the original version of the virtual product, inserting voice and/or sounds in the original version of the virtual product, hierarchical coding of the original version of the virtual product while eliminating predetermined improvement layers, and/or cutting the original version of the virtual product.

5. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the reduced version of the virtual product is an at least partially encrypted version of the original version of the virtual product, and wherein step (c.2) includes receiving a key for decrypting the encrypted version.

6. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 5, wherein step (a) includes at least partially encrypting the original version of the virtual product.

7. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein step (a) includes introducing additional data into the reduced version of the virtual product.

8. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein step (b) includes passing on the reduced version via a network, a wireless connection and/or a portable storage medium.

9. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the information created in step (c.3) indicates a reward for the distributor.

10. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2, comprising:

(d) providing a reduced version of the virtual product to the third party who has acquired the pre-determined right to the original version of the virtual product; and

(e) associating further information with the reduced version of the virtual product, the further information relating to the distributor and/or the third party, so as to create, in a further passing-on of the reduced version to a further third party, information indicating that an acquisition of a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product by the further third party is based on the passing-on of the reduced version by the distributor and/or the third party.

11. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the distributor is a first buyer who has acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider, and wherein the third party is a second buyer.

12. (Currently Amended) Digital storage medium having stored thereon a [[A]] computer program having a program code for carrying out ~~the~~ a method of providing a virtual product to third parties, when the program runs on a computer, wherein the virtual product being is present in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality, the method comprising:

(a) providing a reduced version of the virtual product, and information relating to a distributor of the virtual product, the reduced version of the virtual product having a quality which is inferior to the quality of the original version, and the information relating to the distributor being associated with the reduced version of the virtual product;

wherein, on the basis of the information associated with the reduced version, additional information, which indicates that the reduced version of the virtual product has been passed on to a third party by the distributor, is created if in response to the third party has having acquired rights to the virtual product after obtaining the reduced version of the virtual product,

~~if the program runs on a computer.~~

13. (Withdrawn) A method of passing on a virtual product from a first buyer to a second buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider and having obtained, from the provider, the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality, the method comprising:

selecting the virtual product to be passed on, and extracting content identification data identifying the virtual product;

logging in at a server and transmitting the content identification data to the server;

receiving, from the server, a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, or receiving transaction data from the server, the transaction data uniquely referencing the first buyer, creating, by the first buyer, a copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, and personalizing the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality on the basis of the transaction data, the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality containing all the information required for becoming a full-value product, the full-value product being achievable by a key only;

passing on only the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality to the second buyer; and

obtaining a reward once the second buyer has acquired a full version of the virtual product on the basis of the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality.

14. (Withdrawn) A method of obtaining a virtual product from a first buyer on the part of a second buyer, the method comprising:

obtaining only a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality from the first buyer, the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality containing all the information required for becoming a full-value product, the full-value product being achievable by a key only, and the personalized copy including information which uniquely references the first buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product

from a provider, and having obtained the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality from the provider;

extracting the information which uniquely references the first buyer from the personalized copy so as to separate the information from the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality;

reproducing the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality;

transmitting content identification data which identifies the virtual product, and information which uniquely references the first buyer, to the server;

obtaining the key from the server; and

creating a full-value version of the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality using the key.

15. (Withdrawn) A method of passing on a virtual product from a first buyer to a second buyer, the method comprising:

receiving login information and content identification data identifying a virtual product to be passed on from the first buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider, and having obtained the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality from the provider;

verifying, on the basis of the login information, if the first buyer is a registered user;

creating and transmitting transaction data to the first buyer, the transaction data uniquely referencing the first buyer, if the first buyer is authorized to create a copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, or creating and transmitting a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality to the first buyer,

the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality containing all the information required for becoming a full-value product, the full-value product being achievable by a key only;

obtaining content identification data identifying the virtual product, and information uniquely referencing the first buyer from the second buyer; and

granting a reward on the part of the server once the second buyer has purchased a full version of the virtual product on the basis of the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality; and

transmitting the key to the second buyer.

16. (Withdrawn) A method of passing on a virtual product from a first buyer to a second buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider and having obtained, from the provider, the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality, the method comprising:

selecting the virtual product to be passed on, and extracting content identification data identifying the virtual product;

logging in at a server and transmitting the content identification data to the server;

receiving, from the server, a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, or receiving transaction data from the server, the transaction data uniquely referencing the first buyer, creating, by the first buyer, a copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, and personalizing the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality on the basis of the transaction data;

passing on only the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality to the second buyer; and

obtaining a reward once the second buyer has acquired a full version of the virtual product on the basis of the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality.

17. (Withdrawn) A method of obtaining a virtual product from a first buyer on the part of a second buyer, the method comprising:

obtaining only a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality from the first buyer, the personalized copy including information which uniquely references the first buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider, and having obtained the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality from the provider;

extracting the information which uniquely references the first buyer from the personalized copy so as to separate the information from the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality;

reproducing the copy of the virtual product having reduced quality;

transmitting content identification data which identifies the virtual product, and information which uniquely references the first buyer, to the server; and

obtaining a full version of the virtual product from the server.

18. (Withdrawn) A method of passing on a virtual product from a first buyer to a second buyer, the method comprising:

receiving login information and content identification data identifying a virtual product to be passed on from the first buyer, the first buyer having acquired a predetermined right to the original version of the virtual product from a provider, and having obtained the virtual product in an original version in a digital form having a predetermined quality from the provider;

verifying, on the basis of the login information and the content identification data, if the first buyer is a registered user;

creating and transmitting transaction data to the first buyer, the transaction data uniquely referencing the first buyer, if the first buyer is authorized to create a copy of the virtual product having reduced quality, or creating and transmitting a personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality to the first buyer;

obtaining content identification data identifying the virtual product, and information uniquely referencing the first buyer from the second buyer; and

granting a reward on the part of the server once the second buyer has purchased a full version of the virtual product on the basis of the personalized copy of the virtual product having reduced quality; and

transmitting a full version of the virtual product to the second buyer.